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ABSTRACT

Designed to give primary school teachers some of the tools necessary to prepare their students to do well on the performance based Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), this booklet provides released items from the 1997-1998 MAP Communication Arts test. MAP consists of three reading passages followed by constructed-response items, a formal writing portion in which students respond to a prompt related to the general theme of the reading passages, and an "off-the-shelf" reading and language arts test. The first section of the booklet includes the released grade 3 reading passages, released items that go with those passages, the scoring guides used to score the items, and sample student work at each score point. The final section presents brief descriptions of 48 tips regarding reading, writing, and test-taking for teachers to use to prepare their students for the test. (RS)

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Navigating the MAP:

Communication Arts

ELEMENTARY

- Released Items
- Scoring Guides
- Anchor Papers

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ED 430 235

CS 216 699

Spring 1998 Assessment
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Navigating the MAP:
Communication Arts

ELEMENTARY

Published by the
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Division of Instruction, Curriculum Section

Robert E. Bartman, Commissioner of Education

JANUARY 1999

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Introduction

What is MAP?

"MAP" stands for the Missouri Assessment Program, Missouri's new performance-based assessment system that is currently being phased in to replace the Missouri Mastery and Achievement Test (MMAT). This new assessment system is being developed as a result of the Outstanding Schools Act, passed by the Missouri legislature in 1993. The new assessment system is designed to measure student progress toward meeting the Show-Me Standards, seventy-three rigorous academic standards that were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1996. To demonstrate competency according to the Show-Me Standards, students must have a strong foundation of knowledge in basic subject areas and be able to *apply* what they know to real-world problems. The Missouri Assessment Program is therefore designed to assess both what students *know* and what they can *do* with that knowledge.

The Missouri Assessment Program will eventually assess the six subject areas identified in the Show-Me Standards: math, communication arts, science, social studies, health/physical education, and fine arts. In order to avoid testing overload in any single year, different subject areas will be tested at different grade levels. Math will be assessed at grades 4, 8, and 10; communication arts will be assessed at grades 3, 7, and 11; science will be assessed at grades 3, 7, and 10; social studies will be assessed at grades 4, 8, and 11; and health/physical education will be assessed at grades 5 and 9. The grade level(s) at which fine arts will be assessed have yet to be determined.

Each subject area test consists of three types of test items: constructed-response items, performance events, and multiple-choice items. While administrators, teachers, and students are familiar with multiple-choice testing, the other two types of items may be less familiar. "Constructed-response" simply means that the student must construct and supply his own answer to the item (as compared to traditional multiple-choice questions, now often called "selected response," where the student simply selects a response from four or five given). Fill-in-the-blank items, short answer items, short essays, and graphic organizers are all examples of constructed-response items. Performance events are simply longer constructed-response items. The performance event for the MAP Communication Arts test, for example, is a longer essay. Other performance events may be multiple-step problems such as those found on the MAP Science and Math tests.

The MAP Communication Arts test consists of three sessions. Session one is composed of three themed reading passages, each passage followed by a number of constructed-response items. As stated above, constructed response items come in many shapes and sizes. The most common type requires a two- or three-sentence short answer response. Other constructed-response items might ask students to write summaries, construct graphic organizers to demonstrate their understanding of the passage, or compare and/or contrast two passages. This session of the test is not strictly timed, though there is a *recommended* time limit of sixty minutes. If, however, students are making adequate progress toward finishing the session, they should be allowed to do so.

Session two is the formal writing portion of the test. In this session students are to respond to a writing prompt that is related to the general theme of the reading passages found in session one. In this way, students who do not think that they have much personal experience to draw upon in writing their papers may choose to use examples from the session one reading passages in their papers. Students are given a blank page on which they can use pre-writing strategies to generate and organize material. Following the pre-writing page, students have space to write a rough draft of their papers. Students are then provided with a checklist that they can use to revise their rough drafts. The checklist that is provided to students covers the same criteria that are found in the four-point scoring guide used by scorers to evaluate student papers. Students are then given space in which to write their final copies. Again, there is a *recommended* testing time of sixty minutes for this session of the test, but students who are not finished yet who are making adequate progress at the end of sixty minutes should be allowed to finish.

Session three of the Communication Arts test consists of the TerraNova Survey. TerraNova is an off-the-shelf reading and language arts test created by CTB McGraw-Hill. This portion of the test, unlike sessions one and two, is norm-referenced, allowing schools to compare the scores received by their students to those received by other students across the nation. This portion of the test is strictly timed.

What MAP is Not

Large-scale assessments such as the MAP can provide districts with an objective outside evaluation of the academic performance of the district's students. There are, however, limitations on the amount and kinds of information that such a test can provide. Districts must keep in mind that the MAP test can not provide specific *diagnostic* information about individual students. The student information reported to districts can provide only an overall proficiency level (scale score) for the student within that subject area. In addition, the student-level reports will provide some information about how well students scored on particular Show-Me Standards, but this information is not specific enough to be diagnostic.

What the MAP *can* provide, when scores are taken in the aggregate (at the building and district levels), is information that can be beneficial in *program review*. But even here districts must be careful. MAP reports should only be used as *one* piece of information used to evaluate the effectiveness of the building's or district's curriculum and instruction. Other large-scale assessments employed by the district at the off-grade levels (those not tested by MAP) should provide more information, as should information gathered locally through such sources as curriculum reviews and performance-based teacher evaluations.

In no instance should MAP score reports be used to evaluate the performance of individual teachers. The MAP Communication Arts test is given at the third, seventh, and eleventh grade levels, but the teachers at those grade levels are not solely responsible for how students score on the test. *All* district teachers, K-3, are equally responsible for student scores on the third grade assessment. Likewise, *all* fourth through seventh grade teachers are responsible for seventh grade results, and *all* eighth through eleventh grade teachers are responsible for eleventh grade results. Districts should carefully evaluate their scope and sequence documents to ensure that each teacher in these grade ranges does his or her part to guarantee that students are prepared by the end of the grade to be tested.

The Purpose of This Book

With its focus on constructed responses to reading and with its extended writing sample, the MAP Communication Arts test more closely resembles what most communication arts teachers consider good teaching practice than did its predecessor. As a result, test preparation designed to ready students for the MAP should seem less divorced from regular classroom activities.

Nevertheless, with the heavy emphasis often placed on large-scale assessments (and despite the warnings stated above), districts will undoubtedly want to prepare their students as well as possible for the MAP. Such preparation should include a thorough knowledge of the test format and adequate practice with test preparation materials. This booklet is designed to give teachers some of the tools necessary to prepare their students to do well on the test. It provides released items from the 1997-1998 MAP Communication Arts test. Teachers will find the released reading passages, released items that go with those passages, the scoring guides used to score the items, and sample student work at each score point. The final section includes tips for teachers to use to prepare their students for the test.

Third Grade Released Items

Directions

Now you will read a story about stars and animals. Read the story. Study the pictures. Then answer Numbers 6 through 9.

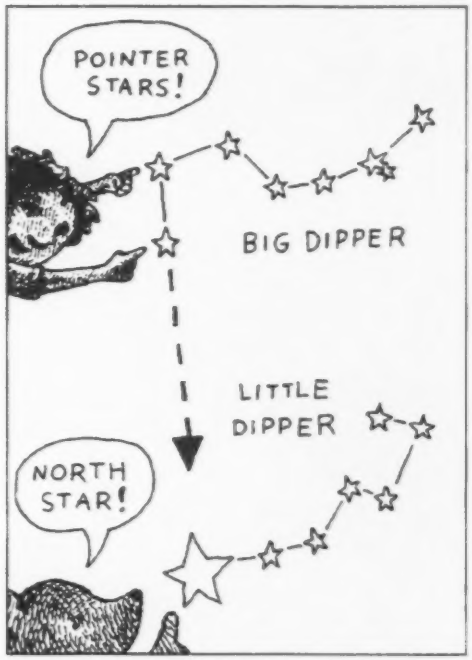
from The Big Dipper by Franklyn M. Branley

Long ago people imagined that the Big Dipper was part of a big bear. They called it Ursa Major. In Latin *ursa* means "bear," and *major* means "big." The Dipper's handle is the bear's tail. Three pairs of stars are the bear's paws. A bright star is its nose. The Little Dipper is called Ursa Minor, or "Little Bear."

Latin = a language used long ago

Some night when it's still, clear, and dark, take a friend outside and look for the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, and the North Star. Imagine that you see the Big Bear. Maybe you'll see the Little Bear, too!

dipper = something to scoop liquid with



Art by Brian Selznick • Text Copyright (c) 1962, 1991 by Franklyn M. Branley • Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

6 The picture at the right shows a dipper.

Why do most people today call the two groups of stars in the story "dippers" instead of "bears"? Use information from the story in your answer.

_____

_____

_____

7 Read this sentence from the story:

Maybe you'll see the Little Bear, too!

Does this mean that you will see a real bear if you look up into the sky? What will you see? Use information from the story in your answer.

_____

_____

9 In your own words, explain to a friend what to look for to find the Big Bear AND how to find the North Star. Use information from the story in your answer.

SCORING • *3rd Grade* GUIDE

Item: 6
Content Standard(s): CA3 *(reading nonfiction)*
Performance Standard(s): 1.6 *(discover and evaluate patterns and relationships)*

6 The picture at the right shows a dipper.

Why do most people today call the two groups of stars in the story "dippers" instead of "bears"? Use information from the story in your answer.

_____

_____

_____

Example(s):

The groups of stars look more like dippers than like bears to most people.

Score Points:

1 point	appropriate response similar to the example
0 points	other

STUDENT WORK

6 The picture at the right shows a dipper.

Why do most people today call the two groups of stars in the story "dippers" instead of "bears"? Use information from the story in your answer.

Because the stars are is the
shape of a dipper.

ID# 129606
Item 6 Score pt. 1
Response provides an accurate explanation.

6 The picture at the right shows a dipper.

Why do most people today call the two groups of stars in the story "dippers" instead of "bears"? Use information from the story in your answer.

Because they make pictures.

ID# 117438
Item 6 Score pt. 0
Response is confused.

SCORING • *3rd Grade* GUIDE

Item: 7
Content Standard(s): CA3 *(reading nonfiction)*
Performance Standard(s): 1.5 *(comprehend and evaluate written and visual works)*

7 Read this sentence from the story:

Maybe you'll see the Little Bear, too!

Does this mean that you will see a real bear if you look up into the sky? What will you see? Use information from the story in your answer.

_____

_____

Example(s) of a Top Score Response:

No. I will see the stars in the shape of a dipper. People only imagine that they can see bears in the sky.

Score Points:

2 points response gives a logical and accurate description of what someone would see if they looked up in the sky at the constellation and shows understanding of the imaginary aspect of constellations

1 point response is too general or simplistic OR includes what they will see or what they will imagine (only)

0 points other

STUDENT WORK

7 Read this sentence from the story:

Maybe you'll see the Little Bear, too!

Does this mean that you will see a real bear if you look up into the sky? What will you see? Use information from the story in your answer.

This does not mean you'll see a real bear. You'll see a bear made out of stars.

ID# 124961
Item 7 Score pt. 2
Response shows understanding of imaginary aspect of constellations and provides an accurate description of what is seen in the sky.

7 Read this sentence from the story:

Maybe you'll see the Little Bear, too!

Does this mean that you will see a real bear if you look up into the sky? What will you see? Use information from the story in your answer.

A shap that look's like a Bear.

ID# 206981
Item 7 Score pt. 1
Response demonstrates partial understanding; does not address bear in the sky.

STUDENT WORK

7 Read this sentence from the story:

Maybe you'll see the Little Bear, too!

Does this mean that you will see a real bear if you look up into the sky? What will you see? Use information from the story in your answer.

You will see the little Bear.

ID# 115919
Item 7 Score pt. 0
Response is confused and inaccurate.

SCORING • 3rd Grade GUIDE

Item: 9
Content Standard(s): CA3 *(reading nonfiction)*, CA4 *(writing formally and informally)*
Performance Standard(s): 2.1 *(plan and make written presentations)*

9 In your own words, explain to a friend what to look for to find the Big Bear AND how to find the North Star. Use information from the story in your answer.

Example(s):

First you find the Big Bear by looking for an upside-down dipper shape in the stars. Then you find the pointer stars on the side and follow them. They point to the North Star.

Score Points:

2 points response gives a complete and accurate explanation of what to look for to find the Big Bear and how to find the North Star

1 point response includes a complete and accurate explanation of what to look for to find the Big Bear OR how to find the North Star OR the explanation for both components is included but is too general or incomplete

0 points other

STUDENT WORK

9 In your own words, explain to a friend what to look for to find the Big Bear AND how to find the North Star. Use information from the story in your answer.

To find the big baer look for the big dipper and the littel bae sold be bellow it. And the front to stars on the big deeper front to the nortstar.

ID# 118931
Item 9 Score pt. 2
Response gives accurate information of what to look for to find the Big Bear AND how to find the North Star.

9 In your own words, explain to a friend what to look for to find the Big Bear AND how to find the North Star. Use information from the story in your answer.

Loock for big dipper and you will find big bear. To finde the north star look for big bears nose and you will find the north star too.

ID# 116771
Item 9 Score pt. 1
Provides an accurate explanation of how to find the Big Bear, but incomplete information of how to find the North Star.

STUDENT WORK

9 In your own words, explain to a friend what to look for to find the Big Bear AND how to find the North Star. Use information from the story in your answer.

you can find the big bear by finding the big diper then go down then you find the North star

ID# 118835
Item 9 Score pt. 1
Resonse includes information about both parts, but is very general in nature.

9 In your own words, explain to a friend what to look for to find the Big Bear AND how to find the North Star. Use information from the story in your answer.

well if you want to look for the north star look north. if you want to find big Dipper look in the sky at night you mit find it there

ID# 126227
Item 9 Score pt. 0
Response is inaccurate and confused.

Directions

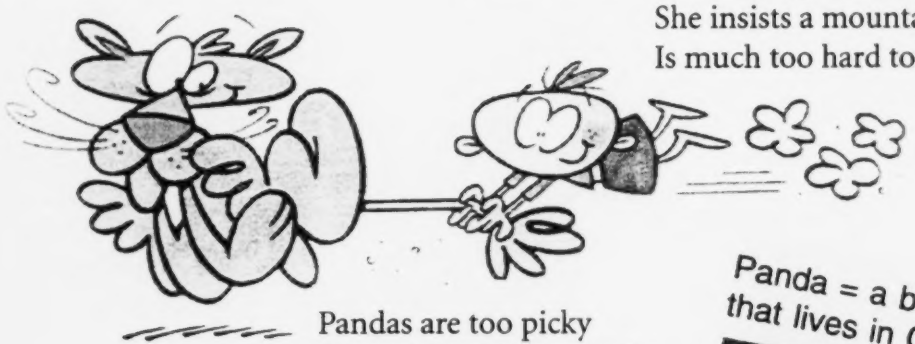
Now you will read a poem about a child who wants a pet. Read the poem. Then answer Numbers 10 through 12.

Choosing a Pet

by Janice Kuharski • Art by Lynette Armstrong

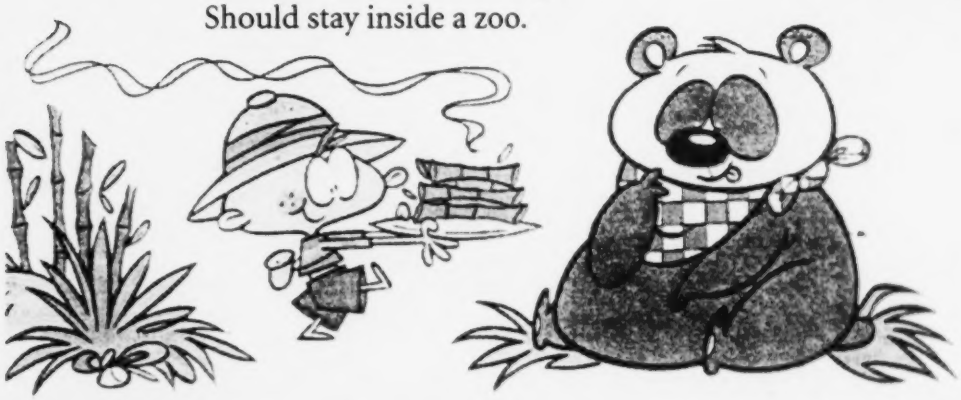
Last Thursday, Mother told me
That I could get a pet.
I must've named a million;
She hasn't liked one yet!

Mom says a baby elephant
Will take up too much space.
She insists a mountain lion
Is much too hard to chase.



Pandas are too picky
Since they only eat bamboo.
She says that bears and tigers
Should stay inside a zoo.

Panda = a black and white bear that lives in China



From *Jack and Jill*, copyright (c) 1996 by Children's Better Health Institute, Benjamin Franklin Literary & Medical Society, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana • Used by permission.

can't abide = can't stand

python = a large snake

moat = a dug-out place filled with water, usually around a castle

She can't abide a lizard
Or a python or a goat,
And to keep an alligator,
We'd need to build a moat.

When I told her that an octopus
Would make a striking pet,
She said I can't have anything
That makes the floor too wet.

striking = unusual looking

Mom said a giant tortoise
Is awkward and too slow.
And when I said a porcupine,
The answer still was no.

tortoise = a land turtle

At last I said an emu,
She had never heard of that.
Imagine my amazement when
She said yes to a cat!

10 Imagine that you are helping a friend who wants to ask his or her parents for a pet. In the space below, write what kind of pet your friend wants and give three reasons why it would be a good pet to have.

Kind of Pet: _____

Reasons:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

11 Explain why Mother agrees to having a cat. Use information from the poem in your answer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12 What are TWO ways you can tell that "Choosing a Pet" is a poem? Use details from the poem in your answer.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Session 1

SCORING • 3rd Grade GUIDE

Item: 10
Content Standard(s): CA4 *(writing formally and informally)*
Performance Standard(s): 3.5 *(reason inductively and deductively)*, 2.1 *(plan and make written presentations)*

10 Imagine that you are helping a friend who wants to ask his or her parents for a pet. In the space below, write what kind of pet your friend wants and give three reasons why it would be a good pet to have.

Kind of Pet: _____

Reasons:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Example(s) of a Top Score Point Response:

Kind of pet: a dog
- it is small
- it is easy to train/easy to take care of
- it can be an outside or an inside pet
- it doesn't eat a lot/it isn't expensive
- it is fun to play with/it is a companion (friend)
- it will protect the family and the house/scare away burglars

NOTE: Do not accept "you can pet it," "they are cute," "they sleep with you" — these are too general and could apply to almost any pet; characteristics must be specific to a particular pet

Score Points:

2 points	response chooses a pet and gives three appropriate reasons — that are specific to the chosen pet — for why it would be a good pet
1 point	response chooses a pet and gives only one or two appropriate reasons — that are specific to the chosen pet — for why it would be a good pet
0 points	other (or response chooses a pet and gives inappropriate reason(s) — or reason(s) that are general and would apply to any pet)

STUDENT WORK

10 Imagine that you are helping a friend who wants to ask his or her parents for a pet. In the space below, write what kind of pet your friend wants and give three reasons why it would be a good pet to have.

Kind of Pet: fish

Reasons:

1. because they can't run away

2. it cant bite you.

3. it wont take up to much space.

ID# 125514
Item 10 Score pt. 2
Response gives three good examples of why it would be a good pet.

STUDENT WORK

10 Imagine that you are helping a friend who wants to ask his or her parents for a pet. In the space below, write what kind of pet your friend wants and give three reasons why it would be a good pet to have.

Kind of Pet: A cat

Reasons:

1. Because it's not to big.

2. Because it don't eat so much

3. It's small.

ID# 126750
Item 10 Score pt. 1
First two responses are valid reasons; "it's small" just repeats answer #1.

STUDENT WORK

10 Imagine that you are helping a friend who wants to ask his or her parents for a pet. In the space below, write what kind of pet your friend wants and give three reasons why it would be a good pet to have.

Kind of Pet: do I went

Reasons:

1. I went a dog.
2. I will name my dog "Baer",
3. It is part cowu

ID# 121***
Item 10 Score pt. 0
Response shows no list of reasons.

SCORING • GUIDE

3rd Grade

Item: 11
Content Standard(s): CA2 *(reading fiction, poetry, and drama)*
Performance Standard(s): 3.5 *(reason inductively and deductively)*

11 Explain why Mother agrees to having a cat. Use information from the poem in your answer.

Example(s):

Mother says yes to having a cat because a cat is a normal kind of pet. Cats don't take up a lot of space. They don't eat too much or make a lot of mess. They are not strange. They don't have problems that would be difficult to deal with in a regular family. Maybe she just likes cats.

Score Points:

2 points	response will give a reasonable explanation of why Mother agrees to a cat and includes supporting information from the poem
1 point	response is too general or does not contain any supporting information from the poem
0 points	other

STUDENT WORK

11 Explain why Mother agrees to having a cat. Use information from the poem in your answer.

because a cat is a ~~good~~ pet it Does not take up much room it Does not get wet often it does not have ~~bikes~~ it isint much trable its dust fine

ID# 118685
Item 11 Score pt. 2
Explanation gives a reason why mother agrees, and includes specific information. (Only one supporting idea required.)

STUDENT WORK

11 Explain why Mother agrees to having a cat. Use information from the poem in your answer.

She agrees to have a cat because they are cute and a good pet.

ID# 118655
Item 11 Score pt. 1
Response is general with little supporting information.

11 Explain why Mother agrees to having a cat. Use information from the poem in your answer.

The boys mother had never herd of a emu so she thought it would be nice to have one.

ID# 116771
Item 11 Score pt. 0
Response is inaccurate and confused.

SCORING •

3rd Grade GUIDE

Item: 12
Content Standard(s): CA2 *(reading fiction, poetry, and drama)*
Performance Standard(s): 1.6 *(discover and evaluate patterns and relationships)*

12 What are TWO ways you can tell that "Choosing a Pet" is a poem? Use details from the poem in your answer.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Example(s) of a Top Score Point Response:

Includes two of the following:
- Some of the lines end with rhyming words.
- The sentences don't look like normal sentences because they don't run straight across the page.
- Some of the thoughts run together and don't sound like complete sentences.
- There aren't periods and commas where there should be. Punctuation is different.
- There are stanzas – groups of words that have a rhyming pattern.
- Capitalization is not usual — there are capitals at the beginning of lines which are in the middle of sentences.

Score Points:

2 points	two appropriate ways similar to the examples
1 point	one appropriate way similar to the examples
0 points	other

STUDENT WORK

12 What are TWO ways you can tell that "Choosing a Pet" is a poem? Use details from the poem in your answer.

1. The poem uses rhyming words.

2. The poem was in parts like Poems should be.

ID# 109038
Item 12 Score pt. 2
Response includes two elements that show it is a poem.

12 What are TWO ways you can tell that "Choosing a Pet" is a poem? Use details from the poem in your answer.

1. It's short

2. and it rymhes.

ID# 118806
Item 12 Score pt. 1
Response includes one element that shows it is a poem.

STUDENT WORK

12 What are TWO ways you can tell that "Choosing a Pet" is a poem? Use details from the poem in your answer.

1. it is funny.

2. it is about animal.

ID# 125478
Item 12 Score pt. 0
Response is inaccurate and confused.

WRITING

Directions

Read the prompt in the box below.

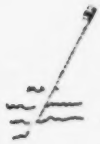
> Imagine that your school is having a Pet Day. Choose a pet that you would like to bring. Write a story about what happens on Pet Day at your school.

Use the space below for your prewriting activity (such as brainstorming, listing, freewriting, clustering, mapping, or drawing). You should use the prewriting activity that you usually use in class to plan your writing. Your work on this page will not be scored.

Go On

Directions

Write the first draft of your paper on Pages 2 through 4. Look back at the prompt and your prewriting activity for ideas.



DRAFT

Session 2

DRAFT

Go On

DRAFT

Session 2

FINAL COPY

Directions

Now you have time to revise your draft. Reread your draft and think about the Writer's Checklist below. Check every box that makes a true statement about your draft.

Writer's Checklist

- ☐ My paper has a beginning, middle, and end.
- ☐ My paper stays on the topic.
- ☐ My paper has complete sentences.
- ☐ My paper includes correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

For every box you did not check, make the needed changes on your draft before you write your final copy on Pages 7 through 9.

Go On

Session 2

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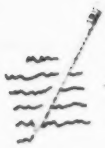

FINAL COPY

Go On

FINAL COPY

STOP

Session 2

SCORING • GUIDE

3rd Grade

Content Standard(s): CA1 *(writing standard English)*, CA4 *(writing formally and informally)*
Performance Standard(s): 2.1 *(plan and make written presentations)*

4 Points

The paper:

- Has an effective beginning, middle, and end.
- Contains a clear controlling idea.
- Clearly addresses the topic and provides specific and relevant details/examples.
- Consistently uses complete sentences.
- Contains words that are specific, accurate and suited to the topic.
- Contains few errors in grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling.

3 Points

The paper:

- Has a beginning, middle, and end.
- Contains a controlling idea.
- Addresses the topic and uses relevant details/examples.
- Generally uses complete sentences.
- Contains some words that are specific, accurate, and related to the topic.
- May contain some errors in grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling that are not significantly distracting to the reader.

2 Points

The paper:

- Has evidence of a beginning, middle, and end.
- Contains a general sense of direction, but may lack focus.
- Generally addresses the topic but may contain some details that are not relevant.
- Contains some incomplete sentences that may be distracting to the reader.
- Uses words that tend to be repetitive, imprecise, and ordinary.
- Contains errors in grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization and/or spelling that may be distracting to the reader.

1 Point

The paper:

- May lack evidence of a beginning, middle, and/or end.
- Is difficult to follow and/or lacks focus.
- Attempts to address the topic, but lacks development.
- Includes incomplete sentences that are distracting to the reader.
- Uses words that are consistently repetitive, dull and colorless.
- Contains repeated errors in grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization and/or spelling that may be distracting to the reader.

STUDENT WORK

FINAL COPY

Today at my school we are having a pet day. Everybody brought a pet to share. Everyone is so excited! I brought a cat.

First we are going to have a contest. Natalie showed her dog and it did some tricks. John brought his lizard. The lizard ate a grasshopper and made some hissing sounds. Everybody else had their turn. At the end Julia got first prize with her rabbit, I got second with my cat, and Matt got third with his turtle.

Next we had show and tell. Everyone told about their pets. Megan said that her hamster

STUDENT WORK

FINAL COPY

was 5 years old and 8 inches long. Adam said his snake was a boa consrictor named Jamie. He likes to eat rats!

Then we had feeding time. Sam gave his guinea pig some food. Lauren fed her bird some bird seed. Tim gave his frog some bugs, they crunched in it's mouth!

We had a great pet day. I think the pets did too!

ID# 124589
Item PE Score pt. 4
Response includes the following:

- *a clear controlling idea*
- *clearly addresses topic*
- *an effective beginning, middle, and end*
- *consistently uses complete sentences*
- *contains few errors in grammar/usage*
- *punctuation, capitalization, and spelling esentially correct*

STUDENT WORK

FINAL COPY

It's pet day! I have been waiting for this day since Kindergarden. Everyone said it was a blast! But its only in 4th grade. So. I was about to see what it was like. But things didn't go as planed. I woke up late and ran around trying to put on my cloths. I got my kitten, J.C. and ran outside to get in the car. We went to the school and everyone was there. Everyone had a differer pet - Eric had a horse, Danielle had a frog, Chase had a rabbit, Amanda had a

STUDENT WORK

FINAL COPY

baby cousin, Angela had a donkey. Every thing was a mess. Eric's Mom got bit by a dog. And the horse got loose and Angela's parents ran to catch the hourse and the donkey got loose. Then Sally walked in with a snake. She laghed so hard she dropped the snake, it slithered into Danielle's lap. That madeher jump and the class lagh. As soon as I got home I went to sleep

STUDENT WORK

ID# 109055
Item PE Score pt. 3
Response includes the following:

- *contains a controlling idea*
- *addresses the topic*
- *generally uses complete sentences*
- *has a clear beginning and middle, but ending is weak*
- *contains minimal mechanical errors that are not distracting*

STUDENT WORK

FINAL COPY

On Pet Day at school I would bring my dog named Balto to show the class. First I would show him around. Then I would show how he eats and drinks. Also I would show how he plays with you and show how he sleeps. Some of my classmates would asks qustions and I would answer their questions and about 1:00 P.M. Balto would halt to go home

ID# 126197
Item PE Score pt. 2
Response includes the following:

- *shows evidence of a beginning and middle, but lacks development*
- *generally addresses the topic*
- *words are repetitive and ordinary*
- *some errors in grammar and spelling that may be distracting*

STUDENT WORK

FINAL COPY

I would Bring it my Bob Tail cat. I think every one will like it because it has no tail. Some people would bring cat, dog and fish Some people would bring in bores with their mom or dad. There will be Some cats with tails and Some cats without tails. Some dogs will be very tall and some will be very short and some will be just rite. We could show them to are principal and I think she will like it alote.

STUDENT WORK

ID# 206063
Item PE Score pt. 1
Response includes the following:

- *lacks evidence of a beginning and end; general sense of direction*
- *attempts to address the topic*
- *run-on sentences that distract*
- *errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation*

Tips for Improving Student Performance

Tips for Improving Student Performance

The overall purpose, the "why," of the following section is to provide teachers with tips to improve the performance of their students on the MAP Communication Arts test. The tips are grouped into "reading" and "writing" sections since these are the two major communication arts processes currently tested (hopefully in future years listening, speaking, and viewing skills will be assessed as well). In the "reading" section, most of the tips are applicable to both constructed-response and multiple-choice reading tests (sessions one and three of the MAP). The tips are then sub-grouped into "general communication arts tips" and "test-taking tips." The general communication arts tips listed discuss teaching practices that should take place regularly in all communication arts classrooms. These strategies, if used regularly, will improve all students as readers and writers, which will in turn improve their ability to score well on standardized tests. The test-taking tips are additional ways to help students improve their test scores on standardized communication arts tests generally, and on the MAP Communication Arts test specifically.

Just as important as the "why," however, is the "how," the teaching methodology used during test preparation. Most of the following tips could be taught in a variety of ways, some more effective than others. Most of these strategies, for example, could easily be turned into "drill and kill" worksheet-based lessons that, while perhaps giving students some needed practice, could very likely have a negative impact on their motivation to do well on the test.

Much more effective would be an inquiry approach to test preparation in which teachers propose to their students that together they study large-scale assessments (and the MAP in particular) as they would study any other literary genre. By approaching the task in this way, teachers and students examine the genre together to identify its components and the problems it presents.

Using an inquiry model, teachers might design mini-lessons to present specific strategies and allow students to try them using test preparation materials similar to the released items found in this book. As students use the strategies, the teacher would move around the room, observing students and conferencing with them about what they are doing and whether the strategy is working for them. In other words, teachers using this methodology would become researchers of their students as test-takers. Finally, students would share what they learn with the other students in the class before moving on to try another strategy. In this manner, students would learn which strategies work best for them individually, and would then be able to carry these lessons forward into testing situations. This inquiry approach has major advantages over the drill approach: it is more motivational, it puts students in charge of their own learning, and it allows students to customize a set of strategies that work best for them.

The tips discussed in this section have come primarily from two sources. The majority of the tips have been suggested by Missouri teachers, especially those who participated in the state re-scoring of the MAP Communication Arts test in the summer of 1998. The other primary source is *A Teacher's Guide to Standardized Reading Tests*, by Lucy Calkins, Kate Montgomery, and Donna Santman (Heinemann 1998). Both of these sources have been gold mines of practical ideas. Nevertheless, the tips found here constitute a list that is far from exhaustive. Teachers should design their own programs for test preparation, teaching those strategies they find helpful and adding their own strategies to the list.

Most of the tips found here are applicable to all three grade levels of the test (third, seventh, and eleventh grades), though teachers may need to adjust certain strategies to better fit their individual situations and students.

Reading

General Communication Arts Tips for Reading

☑ Tip #1: Read, read, read!

One of the most surprising findings of research is how little reading is actually done during reading time in the average American elementary school. During these crucial early years, many students spend the majority of their "reading" time doing art projects, filling in worksheets, or playing games (Calkins 51). While these other activities may offer some benefits, they should be subordinated to the truly important goal of producing proficient readers. Reading, like any other skill, takes practice. Students don't practice reading by doing worksheets; they practice reading by reading. Therefore, one of the best and simplest steps we can take to improve the reading ability of our students is to cut some of the curricular clutter and provide sustained periods of time for our students to read independently and to or with others.

Unfortunately, even less time is devoted to reading at the middle school and high school levels, where few courses are devoted to reading, where reading across the curriculum is seldom given more than lip-service, and where students spend most of their time listening to teachers talk. Sustained silent reading programs have proven effective at the secondary level as well as at the elementary level — when school officials make the hard decisions necessary to cut out extraneous offerings from the curriculum in order to focus on what is truly important.

☑ Tip #2: Teach students to read like writers.

One of the best ways to improve reading comprehension is to teach students to read texts from the point of view of the writer. Even in the early grades, students can begin to "get into the head" of the author, to discuss not only *what* the text says, but *why* the author chose to write it that way. By making this conscious attention to craft a regular part of book talk throughout the curriculum, we can produce students who are highly aware of the conventions of various genres, who can predict plot-lines with a high degree of accuracy, and who demonstrate an appreciation for quality writing. In addition, students who are conscious of the techniques of a writer's craft are more capable of producing similar effects in their own writing. Reading as writers improves both the reading and writing ability of students.

☑ Tip #3: Read a variety of genres regularly.

In the world outside of school, students need to be able to read a wide variety of texts, from road signs to restaurant menus, from comic books to classics, from tennis shoe ads to computer manuals. In order to produce students who are proficient in such varied reading situations, teachers need to provide their students with abundant reading experiences with a variety of genres.

The MAP Communication Arts test contains two sections in which students must read passages and answer test items about those passages. In both of these sections — the constructed-response section (session one) and the TerraNova section (session three) — students encounter a variety of genres: short stories, poems, dialogues, magazine articles, charts and tables, etc. This mixture of genres is found at all three levels of the test: grades three, seven, and eleven.

The implications for curriculum and instruction are clear. Teachers need to give their students not only the *opportunity* to read a variety of materials at all grade levels, but they need to *instruct* them, through genre studies, in the identification of the specific elements of different genres and specific strategies for reading those genres. A particular area of concern is that of primary-grades curricula, which have traditionally focused almost exclusively on narrative reading materials. Schools need to adjust their primary-grades curricula to provide students with experience in a wider variety of reading materials: poetry, drama, non-fiction, etc.

☑ **Tip #4: Build students' reading stamina.**

One of the main problems students face with reading generally, and with reading tests in particular, is that either the difficulty or the length of the texts, or both, is so physically draining or so mentally daunting that they just give up. Reading tests usually employ a collection of texts of varying difficulty. Some of the passages will be below grade level so that poorer readers will have some material that they can handle; other passages will be on grade level; and still others will be above grade level. Having texts at a variety of levels allows the test to *discriminate* between readers (in the sense of making distinctions between readers based on their competency levels). The above-level passages can be difficult even for the best readers, so teachers need to provide students with strategies that they can use to handle these difficult passages. Teachers could instruct their students to:

- Create voices for the characters that they can hear in their minds, and then re-read the passages using these voices with exaggerated expression. This practice helps students to concentrate better on the passage.
- Re-read the passages aloud (though not loud enough to disturb others in a testing situation).
- Keep focused on the text by following along with a finger under the text.

Even when the text is not especially difficult, students might be tempted to give up when the sheer *amount* of text is more than what they are used to. To solve this problem, teachers need to build their students' reading stamina gradually until they are able to deal with larger amounts of text at one sitting. Teachers should help students to:

- Increase gradually the amount of time they read at one sitting.
- Develop individual reading goals that include slowly adding more pages to be read each day. For example, a student who read eight pages today may be challenged to set a goal of ten pages a day next week, and twelve a day the following week.
- Use short breaks (stretching, going to the restroom, closing their eyes for a minute) effectively as a way of re-focusing when they are beginning to tire (Calkins 60-63).

☑ **Tip #5: Teach students that visuals are part of the text.**

Teachers need to teach their students a broader conception of the word "text." On the MAP Communication Arts test, items sometimes require students to do more than just read the words in a passage. Students may have to answer questions which require them to gather information from photos, captions, drawings, charts and graphs, or from any number of other materials, and usually the test directions will not tell students that the answers might be found outside of the words of the reading passage. Teachers need to teach their students to look at all of these materials as part of the total text. During test preparation time, teachers should be sure to include some practice items that require students to use such materials to find the answers.

☑ **Tip #6: Use constructed-response items as a regular part of assessment throughout the school year.**

Students who are tested regularly during the school year with multiple-choice, matching, and true-false questions become adept at answering those types of questions. If they do not have to respond as well to more open-ended short answer and essay questions on a regular basis, however, they will not become well-rounded test-takers. Students who are seldom asked to respond in more rigorous and lengthy ways will not score well on a test such as the MAP Communication Arts test, which requires students to write short essay answers. By making constructed-response items a part of the normal assessment procedure during the school year, teachers can familiarize their students with this question type and build the self-confidence students need to answer similar questions in a testing situation.

Some teachers have taught students how to respond effectively to constructed-response questions by using a "Constructed-Response of the Week." Once a week, at a regularly-scheduled time, the teacher writes a constructed-response item on the board that deals with a topic the class has been studying and has the students respond in writing. The teacher then goes over the scoring guide and a model full-credit answer. Students then discuss their responses and how those responses do or do not measure up to the full-credit answer.

☑ **Tip #7: Use scoring guides throughout the school year to give feedback on constructed-response items.**

The MAP Communication Arts test uses scoring guides (rubrics) on all constructed-response items. The majority of these items are worth at least two points, which means that some responses will receive full credit, other responses will receive partial credit, and still other responses will receive no credit. In other words, responses are not simply either right or wrong; there are *better* answers and there are *worse* answers. This method of scoring is unfamiliar to many students who are not used to being scored on the *quality* of their answers. If teachers regularly include constructed-response items on their in-class assessments, they can go over with students during test review the scoring guides used to grade those items. This gives teachers the opportunity to discuss and model quality answers to such questions (similar to "Constructed-Response of the Week" above).

☑ **Tip #8: Have students create constructed-response items and scoring guides.**

Perhaps the best way to get students to focus on the quality of their short answer and short essay responses is to have them regularly, or at least periodically, create constructed-response items and the accompanying scoring guides. One way to use this activity productively would be to have students create constructed-response items as review questions to prepare for an end-of-unit assessment. Each student could create one or more items, or these items could be created by groups focusing on different parts of the material to be reviewed. The teacher would then combine the items to form a study guide for the whole class. Of course, the teacher would need to exercise control over the process to ensure that the items and the scoring guides produced by the students were quality products and that all of the important material to be tested was covered by the items. By having to write the scoring guides as well as the items, students are forced to confront the question of what constitutes a quality, full-credit response and what constitutes various partial-credit responses.

Another way to use this strategy effectively would be to have students actually create the items and scoring guides for the test itself. This would be a form of open-book test, but it would create a test in which the students have ownership. The focus would not be on whether students studied the right material for the test (they would already know what the test items are), but would instead be on mastery of that material.

☑ **Tip #9: Teach students to use text-based support in written responses.**

Most of the constructed-response items on the MAP Communication Arts test contain two parts. First, the student is asked a content question such as "What is the main idea of this passage?" or "Why is this an appropriate title for the story?" Second, the student is told to support his or her answer with details and examples from the passage. In other words, students are asked to give a generalization (their answer) and to support that generalization with specifics. If students give correct content answers to questions but do not support those answers adequately with specific details from the passage, they will receive only partial credit. During the scoring of the first year's MAP test, it quickly became obvious that many students do not know how to support a generalization with specific details. ***This was the most common cause for the loss of points on the test.*** Teachers can dramatically improve their students' scores on the test by teaching this skill.

☑ **Tip #10: Teach students to respond in complete sentences.**

While constructed-response items on the MAP Communication Arts test are scored according to content and not according to grammar and punctuation, teachers would still do their students a service by requiring them to respond to constructed-response items in complete sentences. Answers given in fragmented phrases can sometimes cause scorers to misinterpret a student's intent. Besides, by requiring students to respond in complete sentences, teachers can reinforce good writing skills while checking students' reading comprehension.

☑ **Tip #11: Teach students to use the higher-level thinking skills necessary to answer "how," "why," and "how well" questions.**

Just about everyone in education today talks about "higher-level thinking skills." Unfortunately, many textbook companies and educational software companies are still producing materials that require only lower-level knowledge

and comprehension. In schools where such materials make up the bulk of resources available to teachers, the teachers themselves must find ways to supplement those materials with other materials and activities that challenge students to think at higher levels.

While some of the items on the MAP Communication Arts test are basic reading comprehension questions that ask students to find details from the passage to tell "who," "what," "when," or "where," other items ask higher-level questions which call for analysis ("how," "why") or evaluation ("how well"). Teachers need to be sure that they are giving their students practice in answering the full range of question types that they might encounter on the MAP test.

☑ **Tip #12: Teach students how to compare and/or contrast between two or more reading passages.**

Recent research has shown that the vast majority of classroom reading time is spent on reading and responding to single texts. Real-life reading, however, often involves making connections or distinctions between multiple texts. In order to prepare students for these more demanding reading tasks, teachers need to teach their students how to compare and/or to contrast between texts. Again, these are higher-order thinking skills that ask students to move well beyond lower-level comprehension.

On the constructed-response portion of the MAP Communication Arts test, the three reading passages are "themed"; that is, all three passages have something to do with a broad theme such as "animals," "careers," or "lessons" (the themes used on the first year's test). At the end of the section, students are asked several questions called "linked items." These items ask students to compare and/or contrast between two or even all three of the passages they have read in that session. For example, students might be asked to compare the motivations of the main characters from each passage or to create a graphic organizer to show the differences between the plot-lines of the passages. Students will perform much better on these items if they have practiced answering similar items regularly in class.

☑ **Tip #13: Teach students how to complete or create a variety of graphic organizers to show their understanding of reading passages.**

Graphic organizers are useful tools for students because, like written summaries or oral reports, they give students opportunities to reconceptualize their reading so that it makes more sense to them.

In addition to requiring students to be able to respond clearly and completely in writing to questions about their reading, the MAP Communication Arts test also asks students to represent their understanding of their reading graphically. Graphic organizers can take many forms: charts, graphs, Venn diagrams, drawings, mind maps, etc. On the MAP test, elementary students are given the graphic organizer and they must be able to fill in the appropriate content. At the middle school level, students are sometimes given the organizer to fill in, while at other times they are asked to create and fill in the organizer. At the high school level, students must be able to create their own graphic organizers and fill them in.

Test-Taking Tips

☑ **Tip #14: Take the exam.**

One of the most useful things teachers can do to gain a better understanding of the MAP is to take the test themselves. Of course, the actual MAP test is secured material, but it would nevertheless be helpful for teachers to read the released passages found in this book and answer the items (without looking at the scoring guides) as if they were actually taking the test. No other activity can quite bring home to teachers how their students feel when taking such a test. By finding out first hand which test items are more "tricky" than others, which ones require lengthier responses, which ones require interpretive skills, etc., teachers become better prepared to anticipate the problems their students will face.

☑ **Tip #15: Use test preparation materials that are similar to the MAP test.**

When preparing students for a particular test, it only makes sense to use those test preparation materials that most closely resemble the test to be given. Since this booklet contains actual items from the first year's MAP test,

teachers should find it to be a valuable resource during test preparation. Teachers may also use the items found here as a guide in creating their own practice items. Teachers should remember, however, that there are no multiple-choice items in this book since the TerraNova portion of the test is norm-referenced and therefore secured material. If teachers want to give their students extra practice with multiple-choice items, they will need to find other test preparation materials similar to TerraNova or they will have to create these items themselves.

☑ **Tip #16: Create, administer, score, and discuss with students your own in-district practice test.**

For those who are motivated to take their test preparation to the ultimate, this is the way to go. Several districts, in preparation for the first administration of the MAP Communication Arts test in the 1997-1998 school year, created and administered their own in-house practice tests based on the MAP model. Of course, this is a great deal of work, but it is also an invaluable exercise not only for the students who get practice with the test model, but also for those teachers who have to create, administer, and score the test. Teachers can return the tests to their students and carefully go over each item, discussing the scoring guides and modeling good quality answers for their students.

(For an example of a seventh grade practice test developed at Georgeff-Baker Middle School, Blue Springs, send a written request to: Willy Wood, Communication Arts Consultant, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480.)

[*Note:* The following seven tips (tips #17 through #23), taken together, form a coherent test-taking strategy that might be taught as the core of a test preparation program.]

☑ **Tip #17: Teach students to read the test items first.**

While directions on most standardized communication arts tests, including the MAP Communication Arts test, tell students to read the passage first and then answer the questions that follow, classroom research has shown that many students do better if they read the items first, then return to read the passage (Calkins 86-87). Reading the items first gives students a purpose and direction for their reading when they return to the passage.

This method of reading in a testing situation is clearly different than reading for pleasure. Teachers need to teach their students that the purpose in this situation is to find answers to the specific questions being asked and therefore their reading methodology needs to be different. Looking at the questions first simply makes more sense in a testing situation.

☑ **Tip #18: Help students find out how many test items they can hold in memory while reading a passage.**

If students read the items first before going back to read the passage, as suggested above, they are probably not going to be able to hold all of the questions for a given passage in mind at once. Many elementary students will have trouble remembering more than two questions at a time. Even high school students probably will run into trouble if they try to remember more than four items at a time. Through practice, students can experiment until they find the best number for each of them individually to try to hold in mind while reading the text. Once students have identified their optimal number of questions to remember, they are ready to practice using tips #17 and #18 together.

☑ **Tip #19: Teach students to identify all parts of a question.**

Another test-taking skill that teachers need to teach their students is how to identify exactly what each question is asking. Some questions have multiple parts, and these parts are often combined into a single sentence with a single question mark at the end. Students should underline each question word (who, what, when, where, why, how, and any other word or phrase that indicates a question). By doing so, they should be able to see if a question has multiple parts. ***Next to not supporting generalizations with specifics, not answering all parts of a multi-part question was the most common mistake on the MAP Communication Arts test in its first year.***

☑ **Tip #20: Teach students to paraphrase test items, turning questions into statements.**

Another strategy that works well in combination with the tip above is teaching students to turn questions into statements. When a student first reads several items to set his purpose for reading the passage, he should underline the question words as described above, then turn each part of the item into a statement, paraphrasing to put the item into his own words. This practice allows the student to reconceptualize the item so it makes the most sense to him. He is then ready to read the passage and look for answers to the first set of items.

Like most of the strategies listed in this booklet, this strategy needs to be practiced with careful teacher supervision. Most students, even many high school students, have trouble paraphrasing questions and turning them into statements. By asking students to turn test items into statements during test preparation and then to report orally their reformulated statements, teachers can check their students' understanding of the items.

☑ Tip #21: Teach students how to mark a reading passage for easier retrieval of information.

Some standardized communication arts tests state that students should not write in their test booklets, even though there is seldom if ever any penalty for students who do so. Not only does the MAP Communication Arts test *not* make such a statement, but it *requires* students to write in their booklets to record their answers for sessions one (constructed response) and two (writing). Even on session three (TerraNova), where middle school and high school students are required to record their answers on an answer sheet in the back of the booklet, there is no penalty for writing in the test booklet, either on the items or on the passage.

Since there is no penalty for writing in the test booklet, teachers should teach their students how to use this opportunity to their advantage. Two practices would be especially helpful: First, while reading the passage to find the answers to the first set of questions, students could lightly write words in the margins of the text as reminders to themselves about the content of each paragraph. As students then move to answer a second set of questions on the same passage, they will be able to quickly zero in on the sections of the text that are appropriate for those items.

A second practice that would be helpful for students would be to underline key words such as dates, names, statistics, and quotations that seem that they might be likely answers to later test items. Underlining such words helps students to remember and more easily locate them later if needed.

☑ Tip #22: Teach students to mark the correct answers on the test booklet *before* filling in bubbles on the answer sheet.

When students first read a set of constructed-response items then go back and begin reading a passage to look for those answers, as proposed above, several problems could arise. One problem that sometimes occurs is that students, after finding an answer to an item and recording that answer, have difficulty finding where they left off in their reading, causing them to lose valuable time re-reading a portion of the passage that they have already read. To counter this problem, students can be taught to simply mark the passage where they stopped reading in order to allow them to find quickly the correct spot to resume reading.

A second, and more serious, problem can occur on the seventh and eleventh grade levels of the TerraNova portion of the MAP test, where students must bubble in answers on an answer sheet. The overall problem is caused by the fact that often students will not find the answers to the items in the order that they are asked. If a student first finds the answer to item three, then the answer to number one, then number four, and if he tries to fill in the proper bubbles as he finds the answers, there is a real possibility that he may bubble in an answer in the wrong bubble. This mistake could have disastrous effects, as it could throw off the entire answer sheet. To solve this problem, teachers can teach their students to first write the correct answers lightly in the margin of the test booklet next to the corresponding items. Only when they have found the answers to an entire page or entire section of answers would the students then fill in the bubble sheet. This practice would minimize the chances of transcription errors (Calkins 87-88, 93, 103-104). Students should be warned, however, that if they forget to transcribe their answers onto the answer sheet, the answers written in the answer book will *not* be counted.

☑ Tip #23: Teach students *how* and *when* to check their answers.

One of the best test-taking strategies teachers can teach their students is to check their answers before turning in their test booklets. Most students, however, have not been taught efficient strategies for checking their answers. Calkins, Montgomery, and Santman found in their research that "check your answers" often was translated as "take the entire test over again" by most students (121-122). A much more efficient strategy would be for students to check only the answers for items that gave them trouble the first time through the test. Teachers could teach students to circle or place check marks next to difficult items in the test booklet as they take the test. Then, at the end of each section, or at the end of the entire test, students could go back to review only the items they marked. It is also helpful for many students, if time permits, to take a short break to clear their minds before checking their answers.

Here is a quick review of tips #17 through #23, showing the steps a student would follow if she were to combine these tips into an overall test-taking methodology:

1. The student (let's call her Sally) opens the test and, after quickly previewing the passages and format of the test, goes immediately to the first set of items.
2. Since Sally has already determined during test preparation how many test items she can comfortably hold in memory, she reads that number of items. For example, if she can comfortably hold in memory four test items at a time, she will read items one through four.
3. As she reads the first four items, Sally lightly underlines key question words in each item to make sure that she understands how many parts there are to each question.
4. Next, either in her mind or lightly in written form in the margins of the test booklet, she quickly paraphrases each part of the four questions, turning them into statements. After doing this, she should have a very clear idea of what she needs to find in the passage to answer these four items.
5. Now Sally turns to the beginning of the passage and begins reading. As she reads, she underlines key words (such as names, facts, statistics, events) which may not answer any of the four items with which she is currently dealing, but may logically be answers to later items. She also may jot in the margin beside each paragraph a key word or two (such as "flood" or "argument against smoking") that describe the main event or idea of the paragraph. These margin notes may be helpful in quickly locating information needed to answer later items.
6. As she finds the answers to the first four items, she writes the answers in the appropriate places in the booklet (for constructed-response items and for multiple-choice items when a bubble-in answer sheet is not used) or writes the answer in the margin next to the item (for multiple-choice items when answers will need to be transferred onto a bubble-in sheet).
7. If she is unsure of her answers to any of these first four items, Sally places a check mark next to these item numbers to remind her to check these items at the end of the session.
8. Once Sally has found the answers to items one through four, she marks with a line or a check mark where she has left off in her reading. She then returns to the items and reads items five through eight, using underlining and paraphrasing again to fully understand what is being asked.
9. She then returns to the passage. She can now quickly scan (not re-read) the portion of the passage she has already read to see if the answers to any of this new set of questions are to be found there. She uses the key words, ideas, and facts she has underlined and the margin notes she has written to quickly find any answers in this previously-read portion of the material. If she finds one or more answers there, she writes them down as described in steps six and seven above.
10. If Sally does not find the answers to some or all of the new items in the previously-read portion of the text, she goes to her mark that tells her where she left off in her reading and continues to read, using the techniques described in step five above to mark the text as she looks for answers.
11. When she has answered all of the items associated with the passage at hand, she may choose to check her work by looking back at *only* those difficult items that she has marked, or she may choose to wait to check her answers until she has answered all of the items for all passages on that portion of the test. Whichever method she chooses, she reads these difficult items again, returning to the passage in order to check her original answer and to see if she can now see a better answer to the item.

☑ Tip #24: Teach students how to block out distracting text.

Often students, especially at the elementary level, find the amount and the density of a text to be daunting. Looking at a three-page article in small print can cause younger students — and many older students as well — to simply give up. Standardized tests often use passages that are formatted in such a way that they appear formidable to students. One way to combat this problem is to teach students to use an index card or folded piece of paper to block out distracting text. This practice allows students to focus on the portion of the passage they are currently reading without worrying about how much more they have to read (Calkins 91).

☑ **Tip #25: Teach students to read directions carefully.**

Teachers should *always* teach students to read directions carefully. Test directions often give students helpful hints about how to proceed and sometimes even give example items that clearly demonstrate the procedure. In some cases, students could lose points if they ignore directions about how to answer certain items.

On the other hand, there are some test directions that might best be ignored. One such direction, already discussed, is the direction to "read the entire passage first, then answer the questions that follow." During test preparation, teachers and students should look at a variety of test directions and discuss which ones could profitably be ignored and which ones should be followed to the letter. In order to make such important decisions, teachers and students need a very clear understanding of how that particular test is administered and scored. **Teachers should *not* recommend that students ignore any test direction until they are absolutely sure that the strategy is allowed on that test.** However, even if the decision has been made to ignore certain directions in full or in part, students should always read *all* of the directions on a test to make absolutely sure that they are doing everything they need to do in order to score well (Calkins 99-100).

☑ **Tip #26: Teach students when it is appropriate to use background knowledge.**

Background knowledge is necessary to understand any reading passage. For example, if a student has no background knowledge about farm life and barnyard animals, a seemingly simple story with a farm setting could prove to be a difficult text. To some extent, then, students always draw upon background knowledge and experience to make sense of a text. When it comes to answering test items, however, students often get in trouble by relying *only* on their background knowledge instead of looking carefully at what the text says. Teachers need to teach their students that they must *always* go to the text for the answer unless the item specifically states that they are to draw upon their own experiences for the answer. The problem is often exacerbated when the test passage comes from a popular or often-anthologized text. In these situations, students may draw upon their memories of having read the story before or of having seen the movie version instead of going back to check the text. Since memory is often unreliable, and since movie versions of texts often differ from the published originals, this is a poor test-taking strategy.

On the other hand, there are some types of items that can *only* be answered by drawing upon background knowledge. Items dealing with vocabulary, spelling, and sentence mechanics, for example, are often written with no context surrounding them. These types of items require that students use their memories about when they have seen the words or grammatical constructions before in their reading. Students can then recall the context and how the word was used or how it was spelled in that situation, then draw upon this information to provide the correct answer (Calkins 111-114).

☑ **Tip #27: Teach students when it is appropriate to guess.**

Some standardized tests penalize students for guessing when they don't know an answer, while other standardized tests do not. It is extremely important for teachers and students to know how the particular test they are taking handles this issue. The MAP Communication Arts test does *not* penalize students for guessing, so teachers should teach students to never leave an answer blank. Teachers should teach students how to make informed attempts at answering constructed-response items and teach them how to narrow down multiple-choice questions to a few possibilities (see below).

☑ **Tip #28: Teach students to use the process of elimination on multiple-choice items to which they don't know the answer.**

On multiple-choice tests, students know that only one of the given answers is considered correct. If they don't know the correct answer right away, however, some students simply resort to guessing among the four choices. This is obviously a low-yield strategy. Teachers should first teach their students that two of four answers are often clearly wrong and can be eliminated with only a little thought. On many items, this leaves students with two possible choices: one which is close to the right answer, and one which *is* the right answer. If teachers stop at this point, having taught their students only to eliminate the clearly wrong choices, the students may simply resort to guessing again, this time between the two remaining choices. Of course, they will do better with this strategy than they would have with pure guessing (they will get approximately 50% correct as opposed to 25%), but obviously this strategy will still

produce low scores if used often. At this point, teachers need to teach students that there will be something incorrect — usually some small detail — about one of the remaining choices and that they can figure out which of the two choices is best. Students will need practice using this strategy, however, and teachers will need to discuss students' thinking processes with them as they practice (Calkins 120).

☑ Tip #29: Before the test, create the testing environment that will produce the best student scores.

Many teachers simply assume that all standardized reading tests require that each student sit at a separate desk, that no reference materials may be used, and that there can be no writing of any kind on the walls. For the majority of tests, however, this is not true (Calkins 126-127). There are usually no guidelines about seating arrangements (The Examiner's Manual for the MAP test says only to "allow enough space between students to prevent sharing answers."); some tests do allow reference materials (For the MAP Communication Arts test, for example, students may use dictionaries, thesauri, and grammar handbooks during the writing session at the seventh and eleventh grade levels.); and many tests do not require that teachers remove testing and writing tips from the walls.

Most teachers understand that any radical change from the normal environment for test day can negatively affect students' scores. It therefore makes much more sense to try to make testing conditions as much like the normal classroom environment as possible. The first step in ensuring a more comfortable testing situation for students is to make sure that the test is given in the regular classroom. For a communication arts test, students will naturally feel more comfortable if they are allowed to take the test with their communication arts teacher (reading teacher, English teacher, etc.). Herding all students into the gym or cafeteria to take the test, while more efficient and easier to schedule, creates a great deal of anxiety for many students.

During test preparation, teachers can encourage their students to find a place in the room that works best for them in a testing situation. Some students may be more comfortable if they are allowed to turn their desks to the wall, or if they are allowed to go to the farthest, quietest corner of the room. Some students may even need to go to a resource room to take their tests. Some students will feel most comfortable by staying in their normal seats facing the front of the room. Other students may do better by being allowed to take the test while sitting on the floor with some comfortable pillows. The point is to explore the different options during test preparation time and arrange the room for the maximum benefit of all students (Calkins 126-127).

Time is another important issue of which to be mindful when preparing students for the MAP Communication Arts test. The TerraNova portion of the test is strictly timed, but the constructed-response and writing portions are not. Instead, each of these sessions has a *recommended* time of sixty minutes. Teachers are allowed to let students go beyond this time limit if they are making "adequate progress," though they are still expected to finish the session on the same day on which they begin. For many students, the recommended sixty minutes is not long enough. ***It is extremely important that the testing schedule allow extra time beyond the sixty minutes for each of these two sessions.*** If this extra time is not allowed, many students will be cut off before they finish and their scores will suffer.

Perhaps the most important element of a good test-taking environment, however, is the attitude of the teacher who administers the test. If the test administrator sends signals to the students that this test is a waste of their time, the students will pick up on these signals and give a poor effort. And while taking standardized tests is never much fun, students need to understand the consequences of not putting out their best effort. While the MAP test currently does not have any high student stakes attached to it, there are clear consequences for poor performance at the school building level.

☑ Tip #30: Before the test, remind students to use those test-taking strategies that work best for them.

If the suggestions found in this chapter have been followed, students will have had many opportunities to determine what test-taking strategies work best for them, and they should have developed personalized lists of those strategies. Before passing out the test booklets, teachers can remind students to rely on those strategies that have proven most effective for them. This precaution may seem unnecessary, but some students prepare very well, only to panic in the actual testing situation and fall back on old and less effective habits. A few reassuring words at this time can focus students and allow them to do their best.

☑ **Tip #31: Immediately after passing out the test booklets, have students familiarize themselves with the test format.**

If teachers have done a good job of choosing or creating test preparation materials similar to the actual test, students should already feel comfortable with the test format. It does no harm, however, to have students take just a minute to flip through the material for that test session to familiarize themselves with it. This practice allows them to quickly see how many passages there are, how many pages of text there are, and how many test items there are. Students then will have a better sense of how to pace themselves (Calkins 132). This practice is even recommended in the Examiner's Manual for the MAP test, which says: "Before administering the test, take a moment to have your students look through the test booklet." ***Students are not allowed, however, to flip past the end of the current session being tested.*** Other formatting details are important to note as well. For example, some tests use stop signs at the bottom of pages to tell students to stop and arrows to tell them to go to the next page. The MAP Communication Arts test uses the phrases "Go on" and "Stop."

☑ **Tip #32: During the test, help students with pacing.**

Pacing is something with which teachers can help their students during test preparation. Some students are so careful that they waste time considering and reconsidering each answer. Others fly through the test, even when it is not timed. Teachers need to counsel their students to make wise decisions about pacing. Through practice, students can determine the pace that is best for them.

During the actual test, teachers should remind their students to work at their best pace. In addition, teachers can note on the board how much time has elapsed (or how much time is left) and give students an idea about how many items they probably should have completed by a certain point (Calkins 132-133).

Writing

General Communication Arts Tips for Writing

☑ **Tip #33: Write, write, write!**

The new MAP Communication Arts test requires a great deal more writing than have previous state tests in Missouri. To prepare students to meet this challenge, teachers need to have their students write often and in a variety of situations. Students need to be capable of answering in writing questions about their reading, they need to be able to write competent papers in response to writing prompts, and they need to be able to do this under the pressure and time constraints of a state test.

The MAP Communication Arts test requires an interesting mix of reading and writing abilities. While the majority of score points on the test are reported as reading points, the constructed response *reading* items must be answered in *writing*. For example, a student may be asked to explain the main idea of a reading passage. The points she receives for her answer will be recorded as reading points since recognizing main idea is a reading skill. However, in order to receive full credit, she has to be able to explain her answer *in writing*. It is quite possible that the student may know the correct answer to the question but that her writing skills are not equal to the task of clearly explaining her answer. Thus, good writing skills are crucial to good scores in both reading *and* writing on the MAP test.

In addition, communication arts teachers need to emphasize to *all* teachers in their schools the importance of writing. Students must explain their answers in writing on the MAP Math, Science, and Social Studies tests as well. If schools are committed to having their students do well on these tests, reading in the content areas and writing across the curriculum programs should be instituted or enhanced.

☑ **Tip #34: Teach students how to compare and/or contrast between a reading passage and their own experiences.**

As stated in tip #12 above, students need to be skillful at comparing and contrasting one passage to another. A related skill that students need to develop is the ability to compare what takes place in a passage to their own lives. The ability to apply lessons learned through reading to personal experience is one of the essential elements of literary study. Since the experiences of each student are different and can not be standardized to a testing situation, items of this sort must be scored based on the student's writing ability rather than on correctness of content. On the MAP Communication Arts test, then, this skill is tested in the writing portion of the test, where students must respond to a prompt that grows out of the three themed reading passages in the constructed-response session of the test.

Teachers should remind students that the well-worn adage "write about what you know" is always good advice, even in a large-scale testing situation. On the MAP Communication Arts test, the writing prompts (see the prompts in the released items) are general enough to allow students to create a variety of paper types — narrative, expository, persuasive — though they probably lend themselves best to personal experience narratives. No matter what direction students choose to go with their papers, they would be well served by writing out of their own experience.

On the MAP test, students sometimes choose to write wild fiction, science fiction, or fantasy tales that clearly are completely unrelated to their lives. The writers of these papers, as a general rule, seem to believe that wild plot-lines are an adequate substitute for good content and well-developed, stylish writing. These papers generally score poorly when compared to those of students who have written out of their own experience.

☑ **Tip #35: Teach students to write with a specific audience in mind.**

Some of the constructed-response items on the MAP Communication Arts test ask students to imagine a specific audience and complete a writing task with that audience in mind. For example, an elementary item might ask students to write to a friend to explain what a story is about. Of course, such an item is just another way to see if students can re-tell (summarize) a story, but scorers would expect the responses to be written in the form of a note or letter to a friend. A high school-level item of this sort might ask students to put themselves in the place of someone who disagrees with the author of an article. Students might then be asked to argue the opposing position in a "letter to the editor" of a newspaper. To do well on items of this sort, students need practice at writing with specific audiences in mind. And while the writing prompts used in session two of the MAP test do not generally specify an audience, teachers should teach their students to imagine a specific audience appropriate for the topic. Students who do this are more likely to produce papers that are focused and that contain that all-important and elusive quality of "voice" than are students who write for a vague "general audience."

☑ **Tip #36: Teach students to respond to a variety of writing tasks.**

The writing portion of the MAP Communication Arts test offers a difficult challenge to teachers of writing. The writing task involves a writing prompt to which students must respond, a page for prewriting, space for writing a first draft, a checklist for students to use when revising and editing their drafts, and space for a final draft. Those teachers who teach process writing will immediately note that requiring two drafts within a single hour-long sitting violates much of what we know about effective writing practice. And they are right. For students to produce their best work, they need the time to do multiple drafts of a paper, and they must be able to seek and use good feedback from others. These teachers need to be aware, however, that none of this is possible in a large-scale assessment situation. Testing logistics do not currently allow multiple days to be allocated to writing drafts of a single paper, and individual test scores are invalidated if students receive help from any outside source during the writing. What the writing task on the MAP Communication Arts test offers might best be described as a hybrid task between on-demand one-shot writing tasks (such as essay test questions and job application questions that must be completed at the interview site) and the kind of true process writing tasks teachers can design in their classrooms. Teachers must realize that, while the MAP writing task does not present the *optimal* writing situation, it does nevertheless present a *real-world* writing situation, and teachers must prepare their students to succeed in these kinds of situations as well as in situations where they have the opportunity to engage in full process writing.

☑ **Tip #37: Teach students to use a variety of pre-writing strategies.**

One of the most effective steps in producing quality writing is to use pre-writing strategies to generate and organize ideas before beginning the drafting process. Just a few minutes spent on a pre-writing activity can make the difference between a creative and well-organized paper and a clichéd and disorganized one. Teachers can ensure that their students spend their pre-writing time wisely by teaching a variety of pre-writing strategies in class and by giving students the opportunity to find out which ones work best for them. Some of the more popular pre-writing strategies include clustering, freewriting, listing, and outlining.

On the MAP Communication Arts test, students are given a blank page on which to do their pre-writing. They can use any pre-writing activity they wish to generate and organize their ideas before beginning their first drafts. And while the pre-writing page is not scored (for all of the same reasons that a teacher would never dream of scoring students' pre-writings in her own classroom), studies done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have proven that students who use pre-writing strategies before drafting score significantly higher on writing tests.

☑ **Tip #38: Teach each of the elements found in the state scoring guide.**

The scoring guides used for the writing portion of the MAP Communication Arts test (enclosed here in the released items section) are generic scoring guides designed to describe good prose writing at the third, seventh, and eleventh grade levels. Since generic scoring guides of this type do not "give away the answer," they may be used year after year and may be released to the public without becoming a test security issue. As a result, teachers may use these scoring guides in their classes on a regular basis as both a scoring tool and as an instructional guide.

Instructionally, teachers can make sure that their students are competent in each of the areas covered by the guide. In order to receive a score of four (the highest score possible), students must write papers that exhibit a majority of the criteria described in the top category of the scoring guide. For example, one of the criteria found on the seventh grade scoring guide states that the student's paper will use "effective cohesive devices (such as transitions, repetition, pronouns, parallel structure) between and/or within paragraphs." For seventh grade students to score well on the writing portion of the MAP test, teachers need to cover criteria such as this one before the seventh grade level. As another example, the eleventh grade scoring guide states as one of its criteria: "the paper has an effective beginning, middle, and end." Teaching students how to write introductions that invite the reader into the text, how to develop body paragraphs that move the paper forward in an understandable way, and how to write conclusions that powerfully or creatively round out the subject matter of the paper will allow students to do well on this criterion on the MAP test.

☑ **Tip #39: Use the state scoring guide to grade class writing assignments whenever appropriate.**

While the MAP scoring guide will not be appropriate for all writing assignments, using the scoring guide when grading assignments allows teachers to focus their comments for improvement in their students' writing on the same criteria being used on the state test. Of course, teachers will need to teach other criteria in addition to those found on the state scoring guide, but teaching the criteria on the state scoring guide will go a long way toward giving students the best possible chance of scoring well on the writing portion of the MAP test.

☑ **Tip #40: Have students create scoring guides for written assignments when the state scoring guide is not appropriate.**

While the state scoring guides are appropriate for many prose writing assignments, they are not appropriate for all assignments. We could not use the state scoring guides to score poetry, or drama, or response journals, for example. In addition, teachers in the content areas could not use the state scoring guide for many of their assignments. For example, a science teacher would not use these scoring guides to score lab reports, and a social studies teacher would not use these scoring guides to score proposals for research studies. In these situations, teachers would use other more appropriate criteria to judge the quality of their students' writing, and this requires that scoring guides be created for these assignments. Teachers could, of course, create these scoring guides themselves, but the situation offers an opportunity to allow students to create them instead. One advantage of letting students write the scoring guides for assignments is that students get to discuss and agree on the criteria for a quality paper for the particular assignment in question. More generally, students get used to thinking in terms of using criteria to judge the quality of papers. This should make students more aware of the scoring process that is used to score their writings on the MAP test.

☑ **Tip #41: Teach students to use the state scoring guide for peer- and self-assessment.**

When it is appropriate to use the state scoring guide to score an assignment, teachers could profitably teach their students to use the scoring guide to evaluate drafts — either in peer evaluation activities or for self assessment. Doing so will quickly make students familiar with the same criteria that scorers will use on the state assessment and will set the stage for instruction in revision strategies.

☑ **Tip #42: After teaching students to use the state scoring guide to evaluate first drafts, teach thoughtful revision strategies that they can use to improve their final papers.**

Teaching those revision strategies that match the criteria found on the state scoring guide will enable students to make meaningful revisions between their first drafts and their final drafts on all assignments, and more specifically on the MAP test. First, of course, teachers must teach students how to write well according to the criteria found on the scoring guide. But no matter how much instruction students receive on writing strategies, they will always be able to benefit from the use of good revision strategies. Teachers must *teach* these specific revision strategies, however. Simply hoping that students will make good revision choices on their papers is not enough.

One method for teaching revision strategies is to present students with flawed examples (a succession of paragraphs with poor or no transitions, a boring introduction, an unsupported argument, etc.) and brainstorm as a class or in small groups how to improve the example. The same methodology could be used with students' own papers.

☑ **Tip #43: Teach students when and how to edit.**

In a testing situation where students have a limited amount of time to write two drafts of a paper, it is essential that they use time wisely. Teachers need to teach students that the proper time for editing is on the final draft. If students spend time editing their first drafts, that time may simply be wasted if they decide to substantially revise their papers between drafts. For example, if a student spends time editing a paragraph of his first draft, then decides during revision to cut that paragraph from the paper entirely, his editing time was wasted.

Teachers need to teach their students *how* to edit effectively as well. While "grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling" constitutes just one of the criteria used to judge student papers on the MAP test, these skills are nonetheless important. If errors become sufficiently distracting to the scorer, the paper is often scored down even if content and style are excellent.

☑ **Tip #44: Teach students to use feedback on their writing to set long-term goals for improvement.**

In order for students to make long-term progress as writers, they need to be taught how to set goals for improvement and they must be given regular feedback on their progress. By giving students frequent opportunities to write, by using specified criteria (such as those found on the state scoring guide) to evaluate progress, by working with students to set goals for improvement on targeted criteria, and by focusing instruction for individuals or small groups of students with similar needs, teachers can become much more effective facilitators of their students' writing growth. A portfolio system offers the best method for tracking student progress over time.

Test-Taking Tips

☑ **Tip #45: Take the writing portion of the state test yourself.**

The best way for teachers to get a feeling for the challenges presented by the writing portion of the MAP Communication Arts test is to take this portion of the test themselves. Attempting to respond to a writing prompt by pre-writing, writing a rough draft, using a checklist to evaluate that draft for revision, then writing a revised and edited final draft — all in a recommended time of sixty minutes — will give teachers ideas about writing and time-management strategies that they might recommend to their students.

☑ **Tip #46: Create, administer, score, and discuss your own in-district writing assessment.**

The best practice students can receive to prepare themselves for the writing portion of the MAP test is by taking a practice test with the same format. Teachers can create their own writing prompt and have their students write in response to this prompt under the same conditions that prevail on the MAP test. After administering this practice test, teachers must pull anchor papers and train themselves to reliably score papers holistically. After scoring the students' papers using the state scoring guide, teachers would then return the papers and discuss with students what they could have done to score better on the assessment. Such an activity would serve as a springboard to further instruction in writing.

(For an example of an in-district assessment developed at Georgeff-Baker Middle School, Blue Springs, write to: Willy Wood, Communication Arts Consultant, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, P.O.Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480.)

☑ **Tip #47: Teach students how to effectively use a dictionary, thesaurus, or grammar handbook in a testing situation.**

Middle school and high school students may use dictionaries, thesauri, and grammar handbooks during session two of the MAP Communication Arts test, and elementary students are allowed to use dictionaries. The idea is to create, as much as possible, a writing situation similar to that found in the classroom on a daily basis, where the use of these materials constitutes a normal part of the writing routine.

It is important, however, that teachers give guidance to their students about the wise use of time. If students spend a great deal of time looking up words or checking grammatical rules, they may not have the time necessary for drafting. Teachers should remind their students that "correct grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling" is only one criterion on which their papers will be judged and that they should pace themselves accordingly.

☑ **Tip #48: Teach students the terminology used on the MAP Communication Arts test.**

All occupations have their own jargon, and education is certainly no exception. Within the communication arts field itself, there exists a great proliferation of terms, and sometimes this terminology can cause confusion. The writing portion of the MAP Communication Arts test uses a variety of terms, and it is important that students understand what these terms mean. Some of the terms used are: brainstorming, clustering, controlling idea, draft, final copy, freewriting, listing, mapping, pre-writing activity, and writing prompt. Many of these terms are associated with the pre-writing stage of the writing process, and teachers could teach this terminology during that stage of instruction. As a reminder, teachers could also go over this terminology with their students immediately after passing out the test booklets for session two.